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General and complete disarmament: implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

Letter dated 21 October 2008 from the Permanent Representative of Thailand to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

With reference to a letter from the Permanent Representative of Cambodia dated 17 October 2008 (A/63/495), I have the honour to inform you as follows:

1. Thailand attaches great importance to the principle of humanitarianism, which has long been at the core of Thailand's foreign policy. For this reason, Thailand became a State party to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction of 1997 (Ottawa Mine Ban Convention). Thailand is fully committed to the obligations under the Convention and has been playing an active role from the beginning, for example, by hosting the Fifth Meeting of State Parties to the Ottawa Mine Ban Convention in 2003. As of today, Thailand has successfully destroyed the country's stockpile of anti-personnel mines in accordance with the provisions of the Convention. Great emphasis has been placed on demining operations in the area along the border between Thailand and Cambodia in which landmines are heavily buried. Thailand has also been active in the areas of victim assistance and sharing of experiences with various partners in many regions.

2. No party should question Thailand's commitment to eradicate this inhumane weapon. Nor should any party question the urgent need and importance of demining operations and saving human lives. It is within this context that Thailand found the letter from the Permanent Representative of Cambodia referred to above most regrettable.

3. All demining operations conducted by Thailand, in partnership with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), are within the territory of Thailand. The urgency of demining in the area adjacent to the Temple of Phra Viharn came after two Thai rangers, who were on routine patrol inside Thailand's territory on

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6 October 2008, stepped on landmines and lost their legs. Thailand was alarmed by the incident because Thai rangers have been using this patrol route for a long time without any incident since this route was known to have been cleared of landmines. Thai villagers have also long been using this route. Thailand was also further alarmed to learn that a team consisting of Thai Mine Action Center (TMAC) and NGOs, which inspected the area after the incident, found a number of newly planted anti-personnel mines in a nearby area. These landmines' physical appearance was almost in perfect condition. No rust was found on the metal parts of these mines and their detonators were still intact. The ground under which the landmines were buried appeared to be recently excavated. Also according to demining experts' inspection, the blast force of the two mines that maimed the two Thai rangers on 6 October 2008 was more powerful than the usual force of old mines left over from three decades of war along the Thailand-Cambodia border.

4. It is important to point out that these landmines were PMN2-type — a type known to be in the possession of Cambodian authorities. According to Cambodia's 2005 transparency report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations under Article 7 of the Ottawa Mine Ban Convention, Cambodia reported that in 2002, out of a total of 3,405 PMN2-type landmines, only 240 of them were transferred from the Ministry of Interior of Cambodia to Cambodian Mine Action Center (CMAC) for development and training.

5. Thailand regards the above development with grave concern as it constituted a serious violation of Article 1 of the Ottawa Mine Ban Convention by a State which is also a State party to the Convention. Thailand found the development even more regrettable that, in this day and age, anti-personnel landmines, which should be assigned to history, were still used.

6. Despite this type of incident, Thailand has chosen the path of dialogue, transparency and goodwill in solving the problem with Cambodia. On 17 October 2008, Thailand officially requested clarification from Cambodia concerning the aforementioned development. Thailand is still waiting for a response from Cambodia.

7. In this connection, Thailand finds it most regrettable that Cambodia, instead of returning the goodwill and choosing the path of dialogue, has chosen to divert attention away from the issue concerned by misleading the international community without the courtesy of responding to Thailand's request for clarification. This kind of action naturally raises question about Cambodia's sincerity and intention.

8. Thailand stands ready, as we have always been, to consult and cooperate with Cambodia to resolve any differences peacefully through existing bilateral consultations. Thailand and Cambodia are, after all, neighbours for life and family members of ASEAN.

I have the honour to request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 89 (k).

(*Signed*) Don **Pramudwinai**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
of the Kingdom of Thailand to the United Nations